

Understanding the Effectiveness of the Functional Behavior

Assessment Process

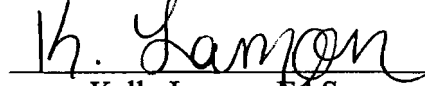
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Crystal Huset

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Kelly Lamon, Ed.S.

The Graduate School

University of Wisconsin-Stout

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**The Graduate School  
University of Wisconsin-Stout  
Menomonie, WI**

**Author:** Huset, Crystal M.

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**ABSTRACT**

Disruption, aggression, academic failure, and problem student behavior all seem to be challenges and concerns for school districts nationwide. As school districts tackle these challenges they are looking for interventions that will help identify and solve behavior problems. Legal mandates and best practices identify functional behavioral assessment (FBA) as the best way to identify the function of a students behavior, and as a means of developing a behavioral support plan (BSP).

This study provides a literature review, describing the rationale for FBA, the theories and plans for conducting an FBA, the current practices for FBA, and the reported effectiveness of using FBA in schools. Additionally, the researcher will provide implications FBA has on the school counseling profession and suggestions for further research in the area of FBA.

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## Chapter I: Introduction

Student disruption, aggression, and academic failure are just some of the current problems in school systems nationwide. “Administrators, teachers, parents, and communities often feel overwhelmed and challenged by students with problem behavior” (Crone & Horner, 2003, p. 1). Behavior seems to be one of the biggest concerns that teachers have. Historically, teachers and principals have tried many different approaches to alleviate problem behaviors, or increase good behaviors. Detention, suspension, time out, and punishment can target problem behavior after it occurs, but educators tend to see the problems continue. According to Cole and Shapiro (1994), “Token economies, differential reinforcement, and other positive reinforcement techniques have been used to increase desired classroom behaviors” (p. 2). Whether it is increasing desired behavior or minimizing problem behavior, these interventions generally focus on the general population of students. What about the at-risk students, or students with disabilities who do not respond to in-the-classroom interventions? In the most recent years, the inclusion of students with special education needs into regular education classrooms has caused educators to critically examine current methods of inclusion and best practice. Part of inclusion and best practice is handling challenging behaviors that occur in these inclusion settings.

Crone, Horner, and Hawken (2004) suggested that 20% of students need more of a special approach to intervention. This special approach to intervention can come in many forms. Some school districts include behavior on 504 or individual education plans (IEP). Others choose to create a completely separate problem-solving model when dealing with behavior, using a behavior coordinator or team to determine the best course

of action for individual students. In order to help all students, intervention has been two-fold. Some interventions have included whole school programs, some have been with individual classrooms, while others target individual student behavior. According to Lane, Barton-Arwood, Lawrence Spencer, & Robertson Kalberg (2007), "Functional assessment has become a preferred method for analyzing student behavior problems, including aggression, noncompliance, disruption, and self-injury" (n.p.). This can be attributed to the federal mandates making it both a necessity and best practice. "If Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBA) are to be a major part of the assessment and intervention process their adoption and utilization needs to be investigated" (Blood & Neel, 2006, p. 68). According to Benazzi, Horner, and Good (2007) there is a "research-to-practice gap" that exists between functional behavior assessments and how they are currently being implemented (p. 169).

### *Rationale*

With the reauthorization of IDEA in 1997, schools have been asked to complete a behavior support plan (BSP) for students whose disabilities cause behaviors that may interfere with their education or the education of their peers. The first part of a BSP consists of someone in the school performing what is understood as an FBA. According to Davis and Fox (2005), FBA is not only the standard, but also has, "a clear empirical justification and background" (p. 1).

Overall, "FBA has become a standard of practice in special education" (Davis & Fox, 2005, p. 1). This is most likely due to the legislative actions which make it best practice, but also due to the belief that all behavior serves a function (Crone & Horner, 2003). This means that once a school can determine why a student is presenting a

specific behavior (the function), they will be able to find an alternative to that behavior.

Functional behavior assessments were required by the 1997 reauthorization of IDEA.

“The basic purpose is to help any student who has a disability whose behavior is interfering with his or her progress in school” (Chamberlain, 2005, p. 162). The amendment specifically states:

In response to disciplinary actions by school personnel, the IEP team should, within 10 days, meet to formulate a functional behavioral assessment plan to collect data for developing a behavior intervention plan, or if a behavior intervention plan already exists, the team must review and revise it (as necessary), to ensure that it addresses the behavior upon which disciplinary action is predicated. (Crone & Horner, 2003, p. 5)

This means that for students with special education needs who currently have an IEP, the school should, at minimum, conduct an FBA-BSP prior to changing that student's placement after a disciplinary action.

“Current literature suggests that the use of FBA information is important for selecting effective behavior support elements” (Benazzi, Horner, & Good, 2006, p. 161). FBA information is so valuable because when FBAs are done correctly, it is much easier to understand why a child is behaving the way he/she is, and the elements of the BSP can include things that eliminate the need for the problem behavior.

In addition to the value of determining the function of a student's behavior in order to implement effective interventions, there are additional reasons why FBA has become a standard of practice. According to Dunlap (cited in Lane, Barton-Arwood, Lawrence Spencer, & Robertson Kalberg), “the functional assessment-based

interventions emphasize skill building rather than punishment” and “it promotes and maintains desired behavior changes” (2007, n.p.).

### *Statement of the Problem and Purpose of the Study*

FBA's are a necessary and legally mandated function of teachers, counselors, psychologists, or chosen staff in each school district. Because they are the proposed “best practice” form of behavior assessment and modification, research needs to be compiled on the FBA process and its effectiveness. The purpose of this investigation is to document the process and effectiveness of the FBA process as reported in the current literature.

### *Research Questions*

The following research questions will guide this literature review and critical analysis:

1. What does the literature recommend as the practice and procedures for implementing FBA's?
1. How are FBA's currently being implemented in school districts?
3. What empirical research has been done regarding the effectiveness of the FBA process?
3. What are the future trends associated with FBA?

### *Definition of Terms*

The following terms are defined for clarity of understanding and will be used throughout this study.

*Antecedent:* “Antecedents are events or situations that occur before a problem behavior, and can be thought of as the trigger that sets off the behavior” (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004, p. 13).

*Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP):* According to Terry Mauro (n.d.), “A Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) takes the observations made in a Functional Behavior Assessment and turns them into a concrete plan of action for managing a student's behavior” (n.p.).

*Behavior Support Plan (BSP):* “A BSP is a written record that summarizes the FBA information and documents the intervention plan” (Crone & Horner, 2003, p. 55). This is an interchangeable term with BIP.

*Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA):* “... is a method of gathering information about situational events that predict and maintain problem behavior” (Crone & Horner, 2003, p. xii).

*Maintaining Consequence:* The maintaining consequence is an action or an overt emotion immediately following the behavior. According to Crone and Horner (2003), a maintaining consequence impacts the re-occurrence of a behavior.

#### *Assumptions of the Study*

This research study assumes that there is current and accessible research done on what is current practice for FBA use in schools. Furthermore, there is an assumption that there have been studies done documenting the effectiveness of FBA in the schools.



*Limitations of the Study*

This study is limited to the current and accessible published data on FBA. No new data will be created for this study. Due to how recent the FBA mandates are for public school systems, there may be a lack of empirical data.

## Chapter II: Literature Review

The purpose of this investigation is to document the procedures and effectiveness of the FBA process as reported in the current literature. This chapter will review the ideal and current practices and procedures for implementing the FBA process, research on the effectiveness of the process, and future trends cited in the literature.

Functional behavioral assessment is a problem-solving model. The goal of the process is to develop interventions which decrease negative behavior and increase positive behavior. By assessing and analyzing the behavior, individualized interventions can be designed which are specific to the needs of the student.

There are two components of the FBA process that this researcher will be investigating. The first component is the actual FBA. FBA is the process of conducting an assessment of a student's behavior. The second piece is designing and implementing a BSP from the data gathered during the FBA. Ultimately, these two components work together to create the FBA process.

### *Ideal Practice of Implementation*

In the literature there are many variations and recommendations on how an FBA should be conducted. Although it is mandated, IDEA does not outline specific guidelines for educators as to what constitutes a valid FBA or BSP (Tilly, Knoster, & Ikeda, cited in Ward & Erchul, 2006). Crone and Horner (2003) offered a practical, practitioner-friendly approach to the process, and their model will be outlined below.

Crone and Horner (2003) discussed some variations on how an FBA can be conducted. Due to the nature of the FBA process, resources needed, and the individuality of the students, this is unavoidable. There are two different FBAs Crone and Horner

(2003) discussed that practitioners can choose to use. The practitioner must decide which type of FBA will work best for their school and for each particular student.

The first, a simple FBA, can be conducted for students who have a simple problem. It is for those students who are not at risk of being suspended, and when the staff can adequately identify antecedents and consequences. The second, a full FBA, must be conducted when a child's behavior is "severe or complex" (Crone & Horner, 2003, p. 8).

The initial steps in a simple FBA and a full FBA are the same. The first step is to determine an operational definition. An operational definition is one that is specific and observable (Kerr & Nelson, 1998). For example, to just say that a student is aggressive is not an operational definition. A better example of aggressive would be: a student hits an object or another student, with an open or closed hand. According to Blood and Neel, one of the most important components of an effective FBA is whether it has a working operational definition (2007).

Once an operational definition of the problem is in place, the team works toward developing a testable hypothesis. According to Crone and Horner, "The testable hypothesis describes the problem behavior, the predictors and consequences, or maintaining consequences of the problem behavior, and the hypothesized function of the problem behavior" (2003, p. 21). The predictors are also referred to as antecedents, or triggers, and can be used as interchangeable terms. (Crone & Horner, 2003; Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004; & Janney & Snell, 2000). The antecedents are what a student does, or what happens immediately before a behavior occurs. This could be a change of classes, directions given, or another event that precedes the behavior. The maintaining

consequence, or consequence, either term is acceptable depending on your use of the FBA language, is what happens immediately following a behavior (Crone & Horner, 2003; & Janney & Snell, 2000). In school settings, it could be how teachers or peers react to a student's behavior. In many school settings, this information can be gained from a teacher. In some instances this information must be obtained from a teacher, daycare worker, or parent(s). If the behavior, antecedents, and consequences have all been identified correctly, interventions can usually be derived, and no further FBA steps would need to be completed. The team can then take the information collected and create a Behavioral Support Plan (BSP). However, if any of the above components do not seem to be right, or make sense for the individual student, a full FBA would need to be conducted.

A full FBA builds upon the simple FBA and consists of additional interviews and observations in order to make a testable hypothesis. Additional interviews could be done with students, parents, more teachers, or any other person who may have information about this student's behavior. The purpose of the observations is to identify any discrepancies in the hypothesis statement and to determine validity (Crone & Horner, 2003). Ideally, observations would be done by someone trained to observe, and done over a considerable length of time, usually 1-2 weeks (O'Neill et al., 1997). Many times direct observation information is gained for purposes of developing baseline data on how often the behavior occurs, but depending on the type of information gathered, it may aid in determining triggers and maintaining consequences.

There are different ways to record observation data depending on what information the observer is looking for. According to Crone and Horner (2003), a good

observation form will include information about (a) antecedents or triggers of problem behavior, (2) when and how often problem behavior occurs, and (3) maintaining consequences of problem behavior. O'Neill et al. (1997) recommended their Functional Assessment Observation (FAO) form, which helps the observer indicate information about the following: (a) incidents of the problem behavior, (b) problem behaviors that occur together, (c) time when problem behavior is most and least likely to occur, (d) predictors, (e) function of the behavior, and (f) consequences following problem behavior. Another possibility for obtaining observation information is through an A-B-C analysis as outlined by Janney and Snell (2000). This type of observation prompts the observer for information on antecedent, behavior, and consequences of each instance of problem behavior during observation. Once all of the additional observations and interviews are done, the team should have enough information to complete a correct hypothesis. At that point, the team can move on to create a BSP.

The main goal of the FBA is to develop a summary statement, which in turn will create the intervention plan. As Crone and Horner (2003) proposed, the summary statement could be developed from a simple FBA, or it may take a full FBA, with observation to develop it. But ultimately, it is this summary statement or hypothesis, which will be the basis for the plan. Crone and Horner (2003) called it either a behavior plan or a Behavior Support Plan. Janney and Snell (2004) used the term Behavior Support Plan as well. Other authors have labeled it with other terms, such as Positive Behavior Support (Stein & Davis, 2000), Behavior Education Plan (Crone, Horner, & Hawken, 2004), and Intervention Plan (Bell et al., 2004).

The first step of a BSP is to create a competing behavior pathway. This is done by identifying what is happening currently, what a desired behavior and consequence would be, and what a possible alternative behavior would be; all meeting what is identified as the student's function for the behavior. Once this is completed, the team can work towards creating intervention strategies that target the antecedent, behavior, or maintaining consequence. Intervention strategies are designed to (a) teach the student a more desirable replacement behavior, still maintaining the same function, (b) modify the environment, therefore changing triggers for the behavior, or (c) adjust the consequences so the student is not receiving the same desirable consequence for behavior (Lane et al., 2007). Crone and Horner (2003, p. 13) outlined three I's in order to meet these goals:

1. Make the problem behavior *irrelevant*. Decrease or eliminate the need to engage in the behavior.
2. Make the problem behavior *inefficient*. Provide the child with a replacement behavior that serves the same function as the inappropriate behavior.
3. Make the problem behavior *ineffective*. Do not allow the child to obtain what he or she wants through inappropriate behavior.

Once the intervention strategies have been selected, the team would determine who would be responsible for implementing each intervention. Ideally, these duties would be split up between the persons involved and the student so not one person alone is responsible. Finally, follow up meetings would be scheduled to determine the effectiveness of the interventions and to modify them if necessary. Crone and Horner

(2003) suggested that the team plan to meet in 2-3 weeks to review the outcomes of the BSP.

According to the research, this is the recommended and desirable approach to implementing FBA-BSP process in school districts. Unfortunately, this assessment procedure can be labor intensive, expensive, and lengthy. Yet, the plans developed from this type of assessment are individualized to the student's needs. Due to these reasons, along with others, school districts have adopted a range of assessment and implementation procedures.

#### *Current Practice of Implementation*

According to the research, the ways that FBA have been conducted are abundant. What seems to be fairly consistent is that FBAs have been done incorrectly and/or inconsistently in many instances. According to Van Acker, Boreson, Gable, and Poterton (cited in Blood & Neel) "a majority of FBAs conducted by school personnel have serious flaws, and are unlikely to results in adequate behavior plans" (2007, p. 68). Results from a study on FBA completion done by Blood and Neel (2007) indicated that many of the students in a school district who should have had an FBA did not, and many of the FBAs that were done did not include hypothesis statements, and replacement behaviors, both vital components of a credible FBA and BSP. What they did have resembled a BSP, but was incomplete, and was only a list of possible consequences that could be implemented following any number of problematic behaviors. These lists were created for many students and were not individualistic at all (Blood & Neel, 2007). The results of this study showed that FBAs were not common practice in this school district, despite the

suggestion that they are the key to addressing problem behavior (Sugai et al., cited in Blood & Neel, 2007).

Another study done by Hoff (2006) in northwestern Wisconsin suggested some of the same characteristics, yet slightly more encouraging. Respondents stated that they performed FBAs/ BSPs for students on their caseloads who exhibited concerning behavior, or who were at risk of being suspended or expelled. In addition, 37% went above and performed FBAs/ BSPs on all of the students who had IEPs, only 3.7% of respondents reported that they did not conduct FBAs or have BSPs on any of their students. While these rates are higher than the researcher expected, research was not collected on what was actually being done as FBA practices.

In the same study done by Hoff (2006), 40% of special education teachers stated that they did not feel that they understood the FBA process prior to being expected to complete FBAs and implement BSPs. A startling 60% of respondents in the same survey stated that in order to learn more about FBA and their obligations, they sought out their own training. Finally, 14.8% of respondents didn't know or weren't aware of their FBA/BSP obligations. This is a concern as it suggests that teachers who are expected to conduct FBAs or implement BSPs feel they are not adequately trained in their roles.

Some of the inconsistency in FBA completion and BSP implementation may "exist because the skills necessary for the level of behavior analysis required by the FBA process may not be easily acquired through brief, and/or one time professional development sessions" (Blood & Neel, 2007, p. 76). "School-based teams developing function-based behavior support should include a specialist trained in behavioral theory"



(Benazzi, Horner, & Good, 2006, p. 168). Crone and Horner (2003) outlined three recommendations for staffing and training a BSP team. They are:

1. The whole team should all be trained together. Schools should refrain from sending individuals to trainings, and having them train others.
2. Adequate time and resources need to be devoted to design and implement the FBA process.
3. There should be an in-service training in order to explain the process and need for FBA, so the entire staff has an understanding of what is being done.

Staffing concerns such as the need for lengthy training sessions, or a highly trained specialist are one of the thoughts as to why there is such a discrepancy between the intended practice of FBA and the current implementation. There are many other possibilities such as: school budget constraints, length of time needed for accurate results, and lack of understanding of the FBA process.

#### *Effectiveness of the FBA process*

According to Janney and Snell, "Positive Behavior Supports is a rather broad concept that can include a wide variety of intervention practices. For this reason, it is somewhat difficult to evaluate its effectiveness" (2000, p. 3). In one study done by Ellingson et al. (2000), the researcher concluded teachers trained in FBA were able to adequately identify the function of problem behavior; and when interventions were put in place based on the hypothesized function of the problem behavior, those interventions were successful. In another study by Braddock (cited in Gartin & Murdick, 2001), when

PBSs were used there was a significant “(55-60%) reduction of problem behavior” (p. 348).

Unfortunately, due to the difficulty of determining effectiveness of the currently implemented FBA practices, there is very little data to prove its true effectiveness. There are many challenges facing the collection of effectiveness data. First and foremost, the fact that FBA has been a mandate for little over ten years lends itself to one of the primary reasons there has not been a lot of effectiveness research collected. Lane, Barton-Arwood, Lawrence Spencer, and Robertson Kalberg suggested another reason for the lack of empirical research as, “Teachers must know how to incorporate core components that will allow them to make accurate conclusions about the feasibility and effectiveness of the intervention” (2007, n.p.). Another possibility is that there is currently data to support FBA in highly structured settings, but a lack of information regarding effectiveness in less controlled settings such as schools. According to Lane et al., “Function-based interventions published to date have yielded desired outcomes for a variety of students with a range of target behaviors and in a variety of environments” (2007, n.p.).

Nelson, Roberts, Mathur, & Rutherford suggest, “Overall, the utility of functional assessment-based interventions is well demonstrated, although some authorities have voiced concern about the possibility that the utility of functional assessment has extended beyond that which can be supported by evidence-based outcomes” (cited in Lane, Barton-Arwood, Lawrence Spencer, & Robertson Kalberg, 2007, n.p.). There has been research done showing that FBA is effective when used under certain circumstances. Unfortunately, what seems to be happening is that FBA is being

implemented differently in different school districts based on what resources are available and what they identify as effective. Meaning, that the effectiveness can be different in every school district, and possibly even school. In order to determine true effectiveness, FBA would be need to be researched in every school.

#### *Future Trends in Functional Behavior Assessment*

IDEA was reauthorized again in 2004 and continues the mandate of using FBAs and BSPs in schools. Because of its perceived credibility and legal requirements, the FBA and BSP model continues to be used. Educators and researchers continue to develop plans which can be used to conduct FBAs, and plans that are used to implement BSPs. Because this process is gaining in popularity, research will continue to be needed to be able to best meet the needs of students.

Due to regular education teachers being experts in their inclusion classrooms, “it is important to determine the degree to which general education teachers can collaborate successfully with local experts to design, implement, and evaluate tertiary supports such as function-based interventions” (Lane, Barton-Arwood, Lawrence Spencer, & Robertson Kalberg, 2007, n.p.). According to a study done by Lane and colleagues (2007), results from two different studies determined “school-based teams could acquire the knowledge and skills to design, implement, and evaluate a function-based intervention with necessary core components” (n.p.). With that being said, someone needs to be able to train teachers and support staff in their role in the FBA process. Fortunately, as data about lack of training in FBA and BSP becomes available, we can assume that training may also become more common practice.

Another future trend that seems to be emerging is that of response to intervention (RTI). RTI has the following core assumptions, taken from the National Association of State Directors of Special Education Response to Intervention Policy Considerations and Implementation (cited in Griffiths et al., 2007):

1. that the educational system can effectively teach all children
2. that early intervention is critical to preventing problems from getting out of control
3. that research based interventions should be implemented to the extent possible
4. that progress monitoring must be implemented
5. that data should drive decision making

These core assumptions can also be extended to those of behavioral intervention. Many of the steps in behavioral interventions overlap as those with RTI. As educators define problems, evaluate data, implement interventions, and evaluate outcomes, they are able to better understand individual students, and help them based on their individual needs.

### Chapter III: Critical Analysis and Recommendations

#### *Introduction*

The purpose of this investigation was to document the procedures and effectiveness of the FBA. The researcher looked at the ideal and current practices of conducting FBAs and implementing BSPs. Additionally, research was collected on future trends as they are cited in the literature. The following chapter will review each of the research questions and offer implications for future practice and research.

#### *Question 1: What does the literature recommend as the practice for implementing FBAs?*

There are many suggestions on the best way to implement FBA-BSP plans in schools. Crone and Horner (2003) offer the most thorough and user friendly approach. According to Crone & Horner (2003) there are two different forms of FBA that the practitioner must choose from. The first, a simple FBA, is conducted for a student with a simple behavior problem; when the antecedents and consequences can be easily identified. The second, a full FBA should be conducted when a student is at risk of being suspended or expelled, or when a child's behavior is "severe or complex" (Crone & Horner, 2003). The first step of conducting either FBA is to determine an operational definition of the behavior. This definition states the problem in terms that are specific and measureable (Kerr & Nelson, 1998). After completion of an operational definition the team works to create a testable hypothesis. This describes the behavior, antecedents, consequences, and a possible function of the behavior (Crone & Horner, 2003). If there isn't enough information to develop a testable hypothesis, or if the practitioner is doing a full FBA, there would now need to be additional interviews and observations to gather

the needed information. Once the additional interviews and observations have been done, there should be enough information to develop a testable hypothesis.

The main goal overall of an FBA is to develop a summary statement, which in turn creates the intervention plan, or BSP according to Crone and Horner, 2003. A BSP is an individual plan that lists a student's behavioral goals along with intervention strategies" (Crone & Horner, 2003, p. 93). Once the intervention strategies have been determined the team would be responsible for determining who would implement, and follow up with them. There may need to be additional meetings to assess and amend the BSP.

*Question 2: How are FBAs currently being implemented in schools?*

Current research states that many FBA-BSP plans are being conducted and implemented incorrectly. Many were incomplete, or were not individualized based on the needs of the students (Blood & Neel, 2007). A study done in Northwestern Wisconsin respondents had mixed results. Some respondents stated that they were correctly implementing FBAs and BSPs, while only 3.7% of respondents stated they weren't conducting them at all. In this same study some educators who were responsible for conducting FBAs and implementing BSPs responded that they didn't fully understand the FBA process prior to being expected to complete them.

There could be many reasons for the "research to practice gap" that exists between the ideal practice of FBA-BSP completion and what is currently being done (Benazzi, Horner, & Good, 2007). One reason could be that the skills necessary for completing the FBA-BSP process cannot be gained in a brief training session. For many school districts the feasibility of sending a whole team to a lengthy training is unrealistic.

Other reasons this gap could exist include: school budget constraints, length of time needed to collect accurate data, and lack of understanding of the FBA process.

*Question 3: What research has been done on the effectiveness of the FBA process?*

It is difficult to collect accurate results on the effectiveness of the FBA process in general education settings. The process is fairly new, and many of the studies that have been done, were done in special education settings. According to Lane et al. (2007), only a two studies have been conducted on FBA efficacy in the general education setting, with the general education teacher implementing the intervention.

Due to the nature of FBA, the ways that FBAs and BSPs can be conducted and implemented are very expansive. Each school district, and each school within that school district could have a different practice for completing this requirement. Unfortunately, without collecting effectiveness data from every school district it is impossible to collect blanket data on effectiveness.

*Question 4: What are the future trends associated with FBA?*

There is limited information available on the future trends associated with FBA. Since FBA continues to be included as a mandated part of IDEA it is likely to continue.

RTI also appears to be a future trend associated with FBA. As school districts work towards developing behavior plans for their schools or for individual students RTI is gaining popularity. Thus far, RTI has been implemented as an educational intervention; however, through the process information can be revealed about a students' behavioral needs, and therefore can also result in behavioral interventions.

### *Implications on Practice*

Up until recently, FBAs have been used strictly with students who have disabilities as part of the special education process. As more work is being done with FBAs and BSPs, educators are seeing more of a need to adapt a functional intervention approach when working with any student who has maladaptive or disruptive behaviors. According to Gorin & Nealis Kuffner (2002), they “support the administration’s position that schools can and should address many needs of students within the general education curriculum, without having to place them in special education” (n.p.). Additionally, they suggest that FBA be used as more of a preventative measure instead of a reactive response to behavior concerns. (Gorin & Nealis Kuffner, 2002).

Typically, school psychologists have been at the bridge between general education and special education, thus taking on the role of assessing and providing intervention strategies for students, including FBA. However, since the Wisconsin School Counseling Association (WSCA) has mirrored the American School Counseling Association’s (ASCA) new model and created a new Wisconsin school counseling model, the responsibilities of school counselors are changing.

Individual student planning, responsive services, and use of data are all included as core components of an effective school counseling program. Using the FBA-BSP model is an effective use of individual student planning, is aligned with responsive services after a referral, and is an excellent way of documenting observable student data. With these components in place as part of the comprehensive school counseling model, many school counselors will begin to take a more active role in conducting FBAs and implementing intervention plans. This is also in line with Gorin & Nealis Kuffner’s



suggestion that more training be done by staff member in the school districts to recognize and provide behavioral intervention for students (2002).

*Implications for Further Research*

Empirical research needs to be done on the effectiveness of the FBA process in public schools, with a variety of students, and a variety of ages. Furthermore, research needs to be done on whether or not schools across the country are complying with the federal mandates requiring FBA. Finally, research needs to be collected on barriers to implementation of FBA. In order to determine how to implement FBA more effectively, educators, and administrators need to understand what is causing it to be currently implemented incorrectly.

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